

THOMAS SWOBE SOLDIER AND PIONEER OF NEBRASKA

Busy Life that Followed When a Farmer Boy Ran Away from Home Away Back in 1861 to Take a Musket Under Grant and Help Win Back the South to Old Glory.

IN PEACE and in war Major Thomas Swobe has distinguished himself during his life. Activity has been the keynote of his career. He is a veteran of two wars, the civil and the Spanish-American. He is a pioneer of two cities, Omaha and South Omaha. He has been as powerful a factor in building up the country in times of peace as he has been in fighting for it in times of war.

On March 17 of this year he will retire from the army. On that day he will have reached the age limit—sixty-four years. He was born March 17, 1844, an ideal date for an Irishman, though Major Swobe is not an Irishman. His birthplace was Johnstown, Fulton county, New York. There he lived until his fourteenth year, when his parents removed westward and settled in Michigan. Three years later, when the boy was 17 years old, the event which had cast its shadow before for several years occurred. The country was rent asunder, brothers took up arms against each other, the great rebellion had begun. When he first read in a newspaper of the attack on Fort Sumter his blood, like that of a million others, was fired. He was inspired with patriotism. He urged his father to allow him to beat his plowshare into a sword and to enlist in the army. But his parents pointed out with strong argument and with still stronger hand the advantages of a pastoral life compared with the more exciting but more dangerous career of the battlefield. The busy season on the farm was opening and Thomas was kept sufficiently employed during the spring and summer to do more than think of glory.

In the fall, however, he slipped the parental leash and presented himself at a recruiting station in the town of Niles, Mich. He was not yet 18 years old, but he managed to persuade the officer to enroll him and he became a private in Company E, Twelfth Michigan Infantry, on October 16, 1861. He was promoted to be a corporal on December 19 of the same year. His regiment was ordered to the theater of war on March 5, 1862, going to St. Louis, Mo., where it was attached to the First brigade, Sixth division, Army of the Tennessee. The regiment was transferred to the First brigade, First division, Army of the Tennessee, in June, and later to the First brigade, Eleventh division, left wing, Thirteenth corps, District of Jackson, Department of the Tennessee.

Baptized in Fire at Shiloh

The young boy received his first experience in real war in a rigorous school, the battle of Shiloh, that terrible two days' slaughter. His regiment had joined the Army of the Tennessee only a few days before at Savannah, Tenn. General Grant was in command of this army, consisting of about 40,000 men. He was awaiting General Buell, commanding the Army of the Ohio, to come up, and then the plan was, to advance to Corinth, where Johnston was entrenched. But Johnston made a move to frustrate these plans. With 40,000 men he marched out from Corinth on April 3 and advanced upon Grant's position on the river, forcing the fight of April 6. Corporal Swobe was in the thick of this throughout that first day's conflict, which resulted in a victory for the confederate army. In the evening of that day the confederates had captured all of Grant's positions along the river with the exception of one. During the night General Buell arrived with his army and crossed the river under the protection of this one position still held by the union army. The second day brought victory to the union forces and the confederates were driven back toward Corinth. Johnston was killed in this battle and General Beauregard was in command of the retreating rebels.

"General Grant was the calmest man I ever saw even on the field of a great battle," says Major Swobe. "It did not seem to worry him that his army was being driven back. He sat on a hill in his disreputable old uniform, which was, I think, that of a private. He had a cigar in his mouth all the time and he wore a pair of thread gloves. He occupied himself in whittling twigs, picking up one after the other, whittling them to a point or cutting them off square. He could not have been more calm and unconcerned if he had been sitting in a corner grocery store in a village on a drowsy summer afternoon, instead of being the general in command of an army of 40,000 men fighting below him."

The combined union forces followed the retreating rebels toward Corinth and laid siege to that stronghold, which surrendered. The conduct of the young corporal in his maiden battles had come to the notice of his superior officers. A reward came quickly, when, on July 5, 1862, he was made a sergeant. His regiment moved to Bethel, Tenn., and thence on to Jackson, where it remained on duty until August. Then it moved to Bolivar, Tenn., being attached to the Sixteenth corps of the Army of the Tennessee.

Pap Price Makes Trouble

General Sterling Price, with a large force of confederates, had occupied Iuka, a small village on the Memphis & Charleston railway. General Rosencrans wanted it and Swobe's regiment helped to get it in the battle of Iuka on September 19 and 20. They were also in the battle of Hatchie river on October 5. That winter the regiment did guard duty on the Mississippi Central railroad, with headquarters at Middlesburg, Tenn. The winter's inactivity was modified by the attack on Middleburg on December 24 by 3,000 confederates under Van Dorn. The town was garrisoned only by the Twelfth Michigan, which successfully defended its position. General Grant himself took cognizance of this in a general order, part of which was as follows: "The general commanding the post of Bolivar has to thank the defenders of Middleburg that a most determined and apparently overpowering effort of the enemy was defeated by their valor and fortitude."

In the summer of 1863 the regiment was moved to Memphis, Tenn., and thence to Vicksburg, Miss., participating in the expedition to Sattara on June 3 to 6. The regiment participated in the fierce fighting that attended the siege of Vicksburg and was present when it was surrendered on July 4. The regiment was ordered to Helena, Ark., on July 27 and moved thence to Clarendon and then to Duvall's Bluff. It accompanied General Steele on the Arkansas expedition which culminated in the capture of Little Rock on September 10. There the regiment remained on duty during the winter. In January Sergeant Swobe was on veteran furlough until March.

The regiment was on duty at Little Rock, Duvall's Bluff and various other points in Arkansas guarding railroads and on provost guard and fatigue duty until February, 1865. On December 20, 1864, the sergeant received his first commission, being made second lieutenant. He received a first lieutenant's commission on April 12, 1865. He was then detached from the regiment and assigned to duty as assistant quartermaster on the staff of General Graves, commanding the First brigade, Second division, Seventh corps, Department of Arkansas. He was present at the surrender of General Fagan and his forces at Washington, Ark., on June 22. He was detached as post commissary at Washington, Ark., June 22 to October 23, 1865, and as commissary on the staff of General Dwight May, commanding the District of Ouachita, Department of Arkansas, until December. He was in charge of the cotton bureau from December, 1865, to February, 1866.

Into Business Life

He was mustered out and honorably discharged from the service on February 15, 1866. The warlike Mars having now given way to Vulcan and the gods of industry, the eagle having flown away and left the dove in possession of the country, the warring brothers having made peace, Lieutenant Swobe quickly beat back his sword again into a plowshare or a pruning hook or some such instrument of peace and progress. He returned to his home in Michigan. He was a young man, with his way to make. He determined to push into the west, as his ancestors had done, and he chose Omaha as his home, coming here in August, 1866. The plowshare was good enough during the farming season, but in a new country in the fall it was somewhat out of place. So he beat it into a pen and took a position as deputy clerk under Frank Murphy, who was county clerk



COLONEL THOMAS SWOBE, U. S. A. (Ret.)

at that time. He made friends and was something of a politician. So he succeeded to his chief's place and was elected county clerk in 1869. At the expiration of his two years' term he engaged in the real estate and abstract business. He still continued in politics and was elected councilman in 1873, serving on the council of which John M. Thurston was a member. He was re-elected to the council in 1874.

Omaha was beginning to show its strength and to give some indication of its future. It was the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific road and the western terminus of other roads which would eventually build westward from here. It had growing businesses and promising infant industries. Mr. Swobe was quick to recognize

the possibilities of the town and he invested in its property and enterprises with a free hand. He engaged in the hardware business with Milton Rogers. In 1882 he built the Millard hotel in conjunction with J. H. Millard, Ezra Millard, Samuel Shears and J. E. Markel. He bought out the interest of the others in 1890 and became sole manager of the hostelry. Later he was associated with J. E. Markel in the railway hotel and restaurant business. They built up a vast and very prosperous business.

He was a pioneer investor in South Omaha. When the present site of the Magic City was nothing but prairie he had faith in it and he was associated with other Omaha men in the conception and development of the city and the stock yards. He was one of the

incorporators of the Union Stock Yards company and a member of its board of directors. Later he was one of the incorporators of the South Omaha Land company and was one of the men to whom the trust deed of the 1,875 acres on which the city now stands was made out. Others among these were W. A. Paxton, P. E. Iler, J. A. McShane, Charles F. Manderson and J. M. Woolworth.

He was one of the reorganizers of the Omaha Driving Park association in 1890 and a member of the board of directors. He was a member of the Real Estate Owners' association, organized in 1891.

War Finds Him Ready

In 1898 the dove of peace which had dwelt in the land for more than thirty years again winged its flight and gave place to the eagle of war. Once more Thomas Swobe transformed his plowshare into a sword and offered his services to his country. Those services were accepted and he was appointed captain and assistant quartermaster, United States volunteers, May 28, 1898. He accepted and qualified on June 10. This time his country needed him on the other side of the world. Dewey's squadron had annihilated the vessels of the Spaniards in Manila bay, but Uncle Sam's blue coats were in the thick of the fight to gain possession of the Philippine Islands. Also there was fighting on the island of Cuba, near at hand. Captain Swobe was ordered to Tampa, Fla., to equip the siege artillery under General John I. Rogers, chief of artillery.

After the surrender of the Spanish army in Cuba he was ordered to Montauk Point to take charge of the shipment of troops from that place. He was subsequently mentioned especially in the report of the chief quartermaster at Montauk Point for efficient services connected with his duty and was recommended for promotion and for transfer into the regular establishment. From this time on he was to do important service upon the sea in the business of transporting Uncle Sam's soldiers from home to the new island interests. He was assigned to duty as transport quartermaster on the transport City of Berlin (now the Meade) and continued in that position until August 26, 1899, making fourteen trips between New York and Porto Rico and Cuba.

Around the World Again

He was then ordered to the other side of the world on an important mission. He went to Tacoma, Wash., and became quartermaster of the chartered transport Post Albert, sailing for Manila on September 3 with a cargo of mules, horses and army supplies by way of Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and Kobe, Japan. The transport arrived at Manila on October 15 with 512 animals in good condition out of 516 taken from Tacoma. After delivering a part of the cargo at Iloilo and Cebu he returned to Manila, where he was ordered to report to General Bates at Jolo for duty. He was assigned on November 28, 1899, as quartermaster of the Department of Mindanao and Jolo, with headquarters at Zamboanga, Mindanao. He served as chief quartermaster of this department until mustered out of the volunteer service on June 30, 1901. He then returned to the United States and was appointed captain and quartermaster, United States army, to rank from February 1, 1901. On November 18 of the same year he was ordered to New York to take charge of the United States army transport "Crook" as transport quartermaster, and took it to Manila by way of the Suez canal with a cargo and troops, arriving in Manila on February 3, 1902. After distributing the troops at different points in the Philippines and picking up troops for the states he was ordered to San Francisco with the transport Crook, arriving there on April 2, 1902.

At his own request he was then relieved from the transport service and ordered to Sheridan, Wyo., as constructing quartermaster at Fort Mackenzie, Wyo., where he served in that capacity until October 1, 1904. He was then ordered to report to the commanding officer, Department of the Missouri, for assignment to duty as assistant to the chief quartermaster in charge of the government depot. He was promoted to be major and quartermaster on February 16, 1907.

Major Swobe has been granted a month's leave of absence, beginning February 17 and expiring March 17, when he will be retired from service under the age limit as lieutenant colonel. He left last Monday for California to spend the month visiting with his son.

Major Swobe married Miss Aline Scott in Omaha and they have two sons, Edwin T. Swobe of Omaha, engaged in the insurance business, and Dwight Swobe of San Francisco, traffic manager of the Mt. Cloud River and Railroad company of California.

Scientific Study of Light and Heat Reflected by Sun

(An Extract from "Popular Astronomy," by Flammarion and Gore.)

ALREADY the star of Venus, Chasica, gives the signal of morning. Scarcely do her silvery fires sparkle on the horizon, when a gentle murmuring is heard round the temple. Soon the azure of the sky pales toward the east, waves of purple and gold inundate the celestial plains. The watchful eye of the Indians observe its gradations and their emotion increases with each new tint. Suddenly the light rushes in great waves from the horizon; the star which sheds it rises in the sky; the temple opens and the pontiff, in the midst of the Incas and a choir of sacred virgins, sings the solemn hymn, which at the same instant is repeated by thousands of voices from mountain to mountain.

Thus writes Marmontel when describing the festival of the Sun—the god worshipped by primitive nations. And at the return of the equinox the rising of the sun, the god of day, the king of light, was saluted by the Incas from the heights of their cyclopean terraces. The same adoration, the same worship, is met with among all the ancient peoples. Without yet taking into account the real size and the incomparable importance of the dazzling star, they already knew that he is the father of terrestrial nature; they knew that it is his heat which supports life; they knew that it is he who makes the trees in the forest to grow, the stream to flow in the valley, the flowers of the meadow to bloom, the bird to slug in the wood, the cereals and the vines to ripen; and they hailed him their father, their friend and their protector.

Modern science has not only confirmed, but increased tenfold, a hundredfold, the ancient conjectures. The sun's light, heat and power are as much above the ancient ideas as the poetry of nature is above our interpretation. No light created by human industry can compare with his. Interposed before his disc, the brilliant electric light appears black. The highest temperatures of our furnaces, that of the melting of gold, of silver, of platinum, of iron, are but ice compared with the solar heat. The astronomers of the school of Pythagoras, who thought they gave a grand idea of the day star by estimating its distance at 44,740 miles and its diameter at 384 miles, were far from the reality as the ant who believed itself the size of a horse. And yet, to estimate the sun as the size of the Peloponnesus was then such boldness in the eyes of the classical conservatives and

the teaching doctors that for having asserted this beginning of truth the philosopher Anaxagoras was persecuted and condemned to death—a sentence commuted to a degree of exile on the petition of Pericles! The trial of Galileo was, later on, a repetition of that of Anaxagoras. Photometric measures of the solar light show that it is equivalent to 1,575,000,000,000,000,000,000 millions of wax candles, or to 157,500,000,000,000,000,000 millions of carcel lamps, supposing that one carcel lamp is equal to ten candles, or to 15,750,000,000,000,000,000 of gas burners, each equivalent to ten carcel lamps. At the surface of the day star the intensity of the light exceeds by 5,300 times that of the incandescent metal melted in a Bessemer converter, 146 times that of calcium and four times that of the electric light.

The luminous and calorific influence which we receive from the star of day being a fact of constant and universal observation, the question which is presented to us is, not to ask whether this influence is real, but to determine the intensity of a cause which at such a distance can still produce such effects. But what are our temperatures, which, after all, proceed from the sun, in comparison with that of the sun itself? The heat of boiling water appears to us enormous and our living organism cannot bear it. Still, it represents but the ordinary scale on which our thermometers are graduated. Water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade, sulphur fuses at 113 degrees, tin at 235, lead at 325, silver at 945, gold at 1,345, iron at 1,500, platinum at 1,775, iridium at 1,950. The furnaces of our laboratories have succeeded in producing heats of 2,500 to 3,000 degrees.

What are these effects in comparison with the incandescent star, which, across a distance of 93,000,000 miles, and only by a quantity of heat 2,000 millions of times less intense than that which it radiates, is still capable of warming our planet to a point which makes it live in the fecundity of this radiation. The quantity of heat emitted by the sun was measured by Sir John Herschel at the Cape of Good Hope and by Pouillet of Paris. The agreement between the two series of measurements is very remarkable!

Sir John Herschel found the calorific effect a vertical sun at the level of the sea is sufficient to melt a layer of ice of .00075 of an inch per minute; while, according to Pouillet, the quantity of ice melted would be .0070 inch. The mean of these two determinations cannot be far from the

truth; it is .0072, or .437 inch per hour. Taking into account the thicknesses of the atmosphere traversed at different hours, we find that the quantity of solar heat absorbed by the atmosphere is four-tenths of the total radiation directed toward the earth; so that if the atmosphere were removed the illuminated hemisphere would receive nearly double the heat. If the quantity of solar heat received by the earth in a year were uniformly distributed it would be sufficient to liquify a layer of ice 93.4 feet covering all the earth. In the same way it would cause an ocean of cool water, having a depth of sixty-two miles to pass from the temperature of melting ice to that of ebullition.

The sun is the mighty source from which proceed all the forces which set in motion the earth and its life. It is its heat which causes the wind to blow, the clouds to ascend, the river to flow, the forest to grow, fruit to ripen and man himself to live. The force constantly and silently expended in raising the reservoirs of rain to their mean atmospheric height in fixing the carbon in the plants, in giving to terrestrial nature its vigor and its beauty, has been calculated from a mechanical point of view; it is equal to the work of 217 billions, 316 thousand millions horse power; 543,000,000,000 of steam engines, each with an effective power of 400 horses, would have to work day and night without intermission; such is the permanent work of the sun upon the earth.

We may not think, so, but everything which moves, circulates and lives on our planet is the child of the sun. The generous wine whose transparent ruby cheers the table, the champagne which sparkles in the crystal cup, are so many rays of the sun stored up for our taste. The most nutritious foods come from the sun. The woods which warm us in winter is, again, the sun in fragments; every cubic inch, every pound of wood, is formed by the power of the sun. The mill which turns under the impulse of the wind or water revolves only by the sun. And in the black night, under the rain or snow, the blind and noisy train which darts like a flying serpent through the fields, rushes along the valleys, is swallowed up under the mountains, goes hissing past the stations, of which the pale eyes strike silently through the mist—in the midst of night and cold, this modern animal, produced by human industry, is still a child of the sun; the coal from the earth which feeds its stomach is solar work stored up during millions of years in the geological strata of the globe. As it is certain that the force which sets

the watch in motion is derived from the hand which has wound it, so it is certain that all terrestrial power proceeds from the sun. It is its heat which maintains the three states of bodies—solid, liquid and gaseous; the last two would vanish, there would be nothing but solids; water and air itself would be in massive blocks, if the solar heat did not maintain them in the fluid state. It is the sun which blows in the air, which flows in the water, which moans in the tempest, which sings in the unwearied throat of the nightingale. It attaches to the sides of the mountains the sources of the rivers and glaciers; and consequently the cataracts and avalanches are precipitated with an energy which they draw directly from him. Thunder and lightning are in turn a manifestation of his power. Every fire which burns and every flame which shines has received its life from the sun. And when two armies are hurled together with a crash, each charge of cavalry, each shock between two army corps, is nothing else but the misuse of mechanical force from the same star. The sun comes to us in the form of heat; he leaves us in the form of heat; but between his arrival and his departure he has given birth to the varied powers of our globe.

Presented to our mind under their true aspect, the discoveries and generalizations of modern science constitute, then, the most sublime poem which has ever been offered to the intelligence and the imagination of man. The physicist of our day, we may say with Tyndall, is incessantly in contact with marvels so grand and sublime that those who study them have need of a certain force of character to preserve them from being dazed.

And still all this is nothing, or almost nothing, in comparison with the real power of the sun. The liquid state of the ocean, the gaseous state of the atmosphere, the currents of the sea, the raising of the clouds, the rains, storms, streams, rivers; the calorific value of all the forests of the globe and all the coal mines of the earth; the motion of all living beings, the heat of all humanity, the stored-up power in all human muscles, in all the manufactures, in all the suns—all that is almost nothing compared with that of which the sun is capable. Do we think we have measured the solar power by enumerating the effects which it produces on the earth? Error! Profound, tremendous, foolish error. This would be to believe still that this star has been created on purpose to illuminate terrestrial humanity. In reality, what an

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